

[Lee Roach]

Mabel C. Olson

Superior, Montana

TOPIC: William Beach, Prospector

Interview with Lee (James L.) Roach, Superior, Montana

When I knew Bill Beach, he was quite an old man, over 80. He had Al Wade, Jim Rickards, and John McDonald working for him, and others I don't remember. John McDonald was married to old Stella (a prostitute). Beach was just doing the cooking then, and he was a mighty good cook, too. I was sent to the mine to get him by "Joe" (Napoleon) Moderie, who was running the livery stable in Superior. Moderie's stable was an old landmark, at the foot of the hill, on the site of Fletcher's garage that burned in the spring of 1939, next to Pike's drug store.

Moderie had been asked by Walter Mackay to see that Beach be taken to the hospital at Wallace for medical care. Mackay, then a wealthy man and a partner of Beach, had looked after the old miner for quite a time, seeing that he was cared for when he was sick, and that he had everything he needed. Beach turned his holdings over to Mackay.

Mackay was a courtly man, tall, thin, and moustached, quite gray when I saw him. Beach was his opposite: of medium height, heavy set, and he also wore a gray moustache. He walked with a cane. I don't wonder that he was able to interest so many in his claims, for he was a convincing and entertaining talker.

When the mill was first put in, expenses were made. I once saw Beach with fine gold just off the tables, a 2 sack about six inches wide and filled to a depth of about four inches.

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After the mill was abandoned, the copper plates and concentrator were moved from the millsite on Deep Creek to Eddy Creek. There were two of these plates, which were expensive, especially after they had been smeared with gold to hold the quicksilver used in the milling process. Much later, I saw them used, one dry year, for a distillery on Eddy Creek.

Beach used to burn a charcoal pit at the Iron Mountain Tunnel. They got the wood for it from timber cleared off the road they were building over the Nine Mile divide from the Tunnel, along Ziegler Creek, down the hillside to the river. A boat carried the ore along the river to the main line of the Northern Pacific Railway at Paradise, from where it was shipped to Helena or Butte.

Later the Iron Mountain Tunnel joined Missoula County in building a bridge across the Missoula River at Superior. The Coeur d'Alene branch of the Northern Pacific ran through Iron Mountain (now part of Superior) then, and the haul was much shortened.

(Beach was cared for at Columbia Falls Soldiers' Home, Columbia Falls, then transferred to Sawtell Soldiers' Home, close to Hollywood, California. He died at the latter institution. This information was given by Hans G. Scharf, Superior, Montana, County Clerk of Court of Mineral County).